

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendment and following remarks.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-6, 9-20, 23-51 are pending in this application. Claims 31-51 are withdrawn from consideration. Among the remaining claims (i.e., claims 1-6, 9-20 and 23-30), claims 1, 15 and 29 are independent. All of the remaining claims stand rejected. By this amendment, claims 9, 10, 23 and 24 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Independent claims 1, 15 and 29 are amended. Dependent claims 5, 6, 11, 16-20, 25-28 and 30 are also amended. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 6 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite, i.e., as failing to have proper antecedent basis for the terms “the clarity” (claim 6) and “the intensity” (claim 10).

Claims 6 and 10 have been amended as shown above addressing the rejections.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 6 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §112 is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 4, 11-15, 18 and 25-30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 (b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,736,982 to Suzuki et al. (“Suzuki”).

Suzuki discloses a virtual space apparatus where a plurality of terminals are connected to a server sharing a predetermined common virtual space. Each of the terminals represented by an avatar sends to the server the position coordinates of the viewing point and direction of eyes of the avatar in the virtual space, and the visual field image viewed from that viewing point is displayed on a display. In particular, Applicants note a portion of Suzuki (i.e., col. 20/line 4 - col. 21/line 3) teaches that a user can paste his facial videos to its avatar corresponding to the distances from the avatar of the terminal concerned to other avatars.

Independent claims 1, 15 and 29 have been amended for further clarification. In particular, amended claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, “user presence recognition means for recognizing whether each user exists at his terminal device, … processing means for executing an image process as increasing intensity of a mosaic process or a gradation process according as the interuser distance determined by said determining means becomes far away, wherein said processing means decreases the intensity of the mosaic process or the gradation process when it is recognized by said user presence recognition means that any of the users does not exist.” Other independent claims (i.e., claims 15 and 29) are amended in a similar way. Support for the amendment may be found, for example, at page 58, line 5 through page 63, line 23 where a second embodiment of the invention is described.

One of the aspects of the distributed system of the present invention is directed to a distributed system in which the presence of a user is recognized (e.g., the user exists in his office). The invention then executes an image process as increasing intensity of a mosaic process or a gradation process according as the interuser distance determined by said determining means becomes far away, wherein said processing means decreases the intensity of

the mosaic process or the gradation process when it is recognized by said user presence
recognition means that any of the users does not exist.

As Applicants understand it, Suzuki fails to show or suggest this aspect of the present invention as discussed above, i.e., recognizing the presence of the user and execute the image processing for the intensityof a mosaic process and a gradation process.

Accordingly, each of claims 1, 15 and 29 as amended is believed neither anticipated by nor rendered obvious in view of the cited reference (i.e., Suzuki) for at least the reasons as discussed above.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1, 15 and 29 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) is respectfully requested.

Applicants have not individually addressed the rejections of the dependent claims because Applicants submit that the independent claims from which they respectively depend are in condition for allowance as set forth above. Applicants however reserve the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims should such be necessary.

Applicants believe that the application is in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.